DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 414 CE 042 961

TITLE Black Perspectives on FE Provision. A Summary Document. Further Education Unit.
INSTITUTION Further Education Unit, London (England).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-946469-84-9
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; *Black Attitudes; Blacks; *Community Attitudes; Economically Disadvantaged; Foreign Countries; *Postsecondary Education; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Asians; *Great Britain

ABSTRACT

This summary report provides information on two surveys of views of the local black communities and Further Education (FE) teachers regarding FE provision. Part I offers background. Part II highlights these common themes: (1) the context is one of a black population exposed to acute economic and social disadvantage; (2) a serious information gap exists between colleges and communities, and this constitutes for many black people the major barrier to FE; (3) evidence of discrimination is apparent in mainstream vocational FE provision; (4) a strong interest is evident in education, not for leisure, but for improvement of work opportunities and life chances; and (5) the way forward may be to create a better understanding of the nature of FE with intensive and relevant marketing. Part III summarizes the project in South London, Part IV, the project in Bradford. Each part describes the project base, sample, and methods. Findings from the South London project are that (1) respondents wanted academic qualifications from post-school education and (2) barriers were lack of information and lack of required qualifications. Findings from the Bradford project are: an ambivalent relationship between the college and the Asian communities, an FE system that is not well understood, and disproportionate distribution of Asian students by subject. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Black Perspectives on FE Provision

A Summary Document

October 1985

ISBN 0 946469 84 9

© Further Education Unit (FEU) 1985

Reproduction in whole or in part of the contents of this publication is authorised for all non-commercial educational purposes, provided the source is acknowledged.
All rights reserved with regard to commercial reproduction of the contents.

Printed by Lithosphere Printing Co-operative Ltd.,
203/205 Pentonville Road, London N1. ☎ 01-837 1174

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

Elizabeth House York Road London SE1 7PH Telephone 01 934 9000

Chairman J G Owen CBE

Chief Officer Jack Mansell MEd CEng FIEE MMech E

Chief Education Officers
Principals of FHE Establishments
Secretaries of Regional and FE
Examining Bodies
Press and Other Interested
Institutions/Individuals

Dear Sir/Madam

BLACK PERSPECTIVES ON FE PROVISION – AN FEU SUMMARY

I enclose a summary report on two three-month projects carried out for FEU by Ranjit Arora and her team at Bradford College and Roger Jinkinson and team at the Open College of South London. The full reports on both projects* are available from FEU and they provide the detailed data on which the summary is based.

The reports were each based on surveys of the views of members of the local black communities and FE teachers in Bradford and Brixton. Given the different types of community served by FE in these two areas, there are evidently distinct messages from each survey, but there is also considerable common ground. These findings – lack of information, inappropriate marketing, apparent exclusion of black students from certain types of course – confirm earlier work in this field and suggest a clear agenda for LEA and college consultation with the black communities. Equally important to note are the communities' perception of their own educational needs.

FEU policy stresses that the participation of the black communities in FE should not be restricted to a narrow range of courses attracting particular social groups. Extending opportunities in FE is not only about producing more male Asian engineers in Bradford, or about training more female Afro-Caribbean social workers in South London. If the dangers of curriculum stereotyping are to be avoided, colleges must attract across the curriculum. It is clear from the surveys that the black communities strongly support these views. To do so will involve widening expectations and raising aspirations as well as better publicity and greater consultation with the local communities. It will also require a considerable exercise in curriculum review and design by colleges.

It is hoped that this summary report will serve as a useful complement to our policy document** in assisting colleges in the process of responding to a multicultural society.

Yours faithfully

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer

An Asian perspective on FE provision in Bradford (FEU 1985)
An Afro-Caribbean perspective on education for young adults in South London (FEU 1985).

***Curriculum development for a multicultural society: policy and curriculum* (FEU 1985).

CONTENTS

		Page
I	Background	1
II	Common Themes	1
III	Young Adults in South London	3
IV	Young Asians in Bradford	7

Note : The research on which this summary is based was carried out by teams from the Open College of South London and Bradford and Ilkley Community College with particular responsibility for FE provision in response to local community needs. The project directors were Roger Jinkinson (OCSL) and Ranjit Arora (BICC), and the research was carried out by Brenda Bryan, Mahauthaman Mahalingam and Maggie Woodrow in South London and Arthur Arnold, Kishor Dabhi and Pete Sayers in Bradford.

I BACKGROUND

1. The FE system, like the schools, has been hampered in its efforts to develop effective policies for a multicultural society, in part at least by the lack of an adequate information-base. Information of at least two kinds is required if FE provision is to become more responsive to the needs of the different communities :

i) information about institutions: recruitment, take-up and progress of black students;

ii) information about communities : their needs and requirements from the FE system and their reactions to it.

In the absence of such information, the FEU commissioned two local surveys, in Bradford and South London, of community perspectives on FE provision. The full reports are available on request from the FEU* but we give below brief summaries as an aid to colleges who may be developing their own information-base on which to determine policy.

II COMMON THEMES

2. From Bradford and from London, the context is one of a black population exposed to acute economic and social disadvantage as the 'demographic and economic tide' ebbs from the large cities. In each case all the views given are from members of the local black communities, so that the projects themselves give practical expression to a policy in which future initiatives can be determined by rather than for the black population. In both reports, the institutional climate and curriculum of the post-school sector is observed in terms of its relevance to the self-expressed needs of the local ethnic minority groups.

---

* See An Asian Perspective on FE in Bradford and An Afro-Caribbean Perspective on Education for Young Adults in South London (Project Reports : FEU 1985).

3. The strongest message to emerge from both reports is that there is a serious information gap between college and communities, and that this constitutes for many black people the major barrier to their take-up of FE. There is a lack of information about FE in general, a lack of information about particular colleges, and a lack of information about any but a narrow range of courses. What emerges from both surveys is the need for a public relations exercise to create a better understanding of the nature of further education, with some intensive and relevant marketing of the curricula on offer. But more than this, increased take-up by ethnic minority groups will imply :

- a rethinking of current provision
- consultation over course design
- a readiness to reallocate resources.

There is evidence from both surveys, for example, that where Access or other courses are designed particularly (though not exclusively) for these groups, there is a very positive response.

4. In respect of mainstream vocational FE provision, while overt racism, for example, in terms of 'unfriendly staff', was not seen as a major barrier by either Afro-Caribbeans or Asians, there was evidence of apparent discrimination (e.g. concentrations of these ethnic groups in particular subject areas and of their absence from other subject areas). Further questions, such as how much of this is due to strong vocational preferences expressed by young people, and how much is due to the operation of 'invisible barriers' of institutional racism, were raised by participants in the survey, but evidently could not adequately be addressed by the researchers in the time available.

5. From both reports comes evidence of a strong interest in education, not for leisure, but as a means to the improvement of work opportunities and life chances. Clearly, opportunities exist here for colleges to draw on

large numbers of highly motivated students. To succeed in doing so, they will require sensitivity to particular local perceptions of FE. In the Bradford survey there is evidence of a respect for education combined with a concern about religion, languages and gender issues; in South London, there is some cynicism about a state system which appears to be either irrelevant to or inaccessible to the local Afro-Caribbean population.

6. The implied message in both cases is that the way forward may initially be to create a better understanding of the nature of further education, with some intensive and relevant marketing of the curricula on offer. But more than this; an increased take-up by ethnic minority groups will imply a rethinking of current provision, consultation over course design, and a readiness to reallocate resources.

III YOUNG ADULTS IN SOUTH LONDON

The Project Base

7. This project was carried out by the Open College of South London, (OCSL) a federal network which crosses FE/HE/AE divides, to extend opportunities for those who have benefited least from existing educational provision. The OCSL has much in common with Open Colleges and other collaborative ventures elsewhere, but has been designed to meet the needs of an inner-city multiracial area.

The Project Sample

8. Open College students are recruited from the inner-city areas of Southwark and Lambeth where 25 per cent of the population and in some areas 50 per cent of 19-21 year olds belong to non-white ethnic groups, of which Afro-Caribbean is easily the largest. Unemployment figures for both boroughs are much above the national average with the percentage of male unemployed in Lambeth being the highest in South-East England and double the London average.

Unemployment continues to increase and at a faster rate for black people than for white.

9. Within the limitations of a three month survey it was possible to include four distinct groups and to identify their distinguishing features and separate perceptions. The final sample consisted of 60 members of Afro-Caribbean Community Groups, 22 leaders of these Groups, 68 Afro-Caribbean students and 20 Afro-Caribbean teaching staff in member institutions of the OCSL. From this South London environment, the survey considered the responses of people from the Afro-Caribbean community to post-school provision in local educational institutions whose management remains almost wholly white.

Project Method

10. Information was derived from two sources - statistical data from questionnaires, and observations from meetings and informal discussions. Of the two it is the quantifiable approach which carries the most credibility in research terms, but statistical data alone does not tell the full story. The sensitivity of the research area, the suspicions of the use that might be made of a questionnaire to be completed only by Afro-Caribbeans, and obvious disillusionment of people who bear the brunt of unemployment in an area where unemployment is above average and increasing, meant that the limitations of such techniques were revealed.

11. It was evident that, despite many of the preconceptions of the project team, people did not want to be fobbed off with ticking boxes. They had something that they wanted to say. In the informal interviews, conversations and group meetings, target group members took over the initiative, raising issues with project workers, amending the questionnaires and responding to additional questions of their own. In a sense the boundaries of the debate itself were redrawn by those who participated in it. Given the

function of this project, it was essential that the methodology employed enabled such a process to take place.

Project Findings - South London

What is most wanted from post-school education?

12. In general, respondents want what they feel they have missed and what they believe carries the most status : academic qualifications. Against the backdrop of Brixton today, leisure courses were seen as diversionary luxuries and skills training as second best. All four groups - students, teachers, members and leaders of community groups - rated courses for developing students' personal interests as least preferred or least in demand. All groups except the teaching staff rated the demand for academic qualifications above that for skills training.

Barriers to FE for Afro-Caribbeans

13. The main barriers were perceived to be lack of information and a conviction that courses are either irrelevant to their needs or inaccessible to those without paper qualifications.

14. Lack of required qualifications was seen as very important by all four groups and overall was rated the second most significant factor. What emerges is evidence that further education is perceived by the Afro-Caribbean community as being primarily the province of an educational elite who already possess the paper qualifications for entry. It may be that courses in post-school education are well-marketed, appropriate to the needs of Afro-Caribbean people and accessible to adults without qualifications, but the Afro-Caribbean people in Lambeth and Southwark who participated in this survey clearly do not think that they are.

15. Among other factors perceived as barriers, family commitments and a lack of adequate creche facilities were rated highly by teaching staff and by community group leaders. Only the teachers saw unfriendly staff as a

barrier, though one community group leader felt that staff were 'not unfriendly, but indifferent to the needs of the Caribbean and African people'. A few in every group perceived not indifference, but 'a prevalence of racism, sexism and on rare occasions ageism'. The view that their school education had discouraged Afro-Caribbeans from involvement in the post-school sector received virtually no support. Occasionally however there is evidence of a wider disillusionment revealed, for example, by the community group member who dismissed all the above barriers in the single phrase, 'lack of faith in the British system' or by the lecturer who said simply that 'they cannot see the value to be gained'.

Responses to an 'Afro-Caribbean Curriculum'

16. It emerged forcibly that an Afro-Caribbean view of Afro-Caribbean studies is primarily something which needs to be taught to white students and teachers by black teachers to correct the distortions of media-stereotyped images. Access and Return to Learning courses designed to create more opportunities for Afro-Caribbean people were strongly approved of, provided they were not exclusively for black students. The fear here was of courses which, if not soft options, are perceived as such by others. There was an occasional suspicion also of the social control aspects of special courses for black people provided by the authorities in areas where they were having problems. For Afro-Caribbeans, it was suggested by several respondents,the most useful courses would be in self-defence, legal rights, self-assertion and pride.

The educational role of local Afro-Caribbean community groups

17. There was a conviction here that the educational role of Afro-Caribbean Groups should be extended, but fears of segregation are strong, and a closer alignment between the groups' educational activities and the work of local colleges and institutes was sought. Classes, it

was suggested, should be run jointly by groups and colleges 'because many people do not feel confident enough to attend a class in a college'. Others felt that while some classes put on by community groups might be 'too strict', there was 'too much messing about' in the colleges and not enough 'listening to what is going on'. There is evidence here of a gap which needs to be bridged, not only in information sharing but also in respect of Afro-Caribbean expectations of teaching and learning styles. The experience of those Afro-Caribbean groups who have run classes was seen as an obvious resource for colleges in reviewing and improving provision, and in the delivery of courses.

IV YOUNG ASIANS IN BRADFORD

The Project Base

18. The Project was carried out at Bradford and Ilkley Community College, the largest FE institution in the Bradford Metropolitan District, and one of the new breed of colleges of further and higher education. It is a college formally committed to a positive recognition of the racially and culturally diverse community in which it is located.

19. In a population of just under half a million in the Metropolitan District, there are an estimated 38,000 people of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, and 22,000 people of other New Commonwealth origin, including Asian and Afro-Caribbean. Between 1981 and 1986 the number of school leavers of Asian origin is expected to double, in an area where less than 10 per cent of school leavers from ethnic minority groups succeed in finding a job. While there has been a steady and marked tendency for fifth form pupils from ethnic minority groups in particular to stay on at school, there has been a disproportionate decline in the number of ethnic minority school-leavers going on to FE.

ED263414

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Worsell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Black Perspectives on FE Provision

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Summary Document

The Project Sample

20. The sample consisted of people of South Asian origin with some links with FE, whether as students, prospective students leaving school, or their parents. Although a balance of male and female participants was sought, it was found that male students were keener to be interviewed and that parents were almost invariably fathers. The sample was broken down into Hindu, Muslim and Sikh groups. The original intention to include a separate Bangladeshi group was abandoned because of the lack of Bangladeshi students in the college and in the schools selected. A sample of Asian community opinion in Bradford was asked to comment on the findings of the survey.

Project Method

21. Information gathering was by formal interviews, using open-ended questioning techniques to allow the most sensitive approach and to encourage responses. A basic set of questions was set out for use as prompts to stimulate reactions. Schedules of questions were also devised for teaching staff, especially in relation to the numbers of Asian students on certain courses and in some departments. Bradford College operates a system of ethnic record-keeping, and data was available to the survey of the numbers of Asian students in most departments.

Project Findings - Bradford

22. The findings of the survey confirm the trend already in evidence in the statistics for Bradford District that fifth year pupils, and especially those from South Asian families, are opting to stay at school rather than to proceed to a college of further education. This is a choice consistently reflected in the sample by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and by both sexes. While 72 per cent of all fifth form groups indicated a first preference for sixth form study, only 12 per cent put FE as their first choice. Among the college student sample only 22 per cent had come directly to FE from their school fifth form.

23. The preference is in terms of institutional environment rather than curriculum. Forty per cent of those opting to stay on to the sixth form chose not a conventional sixth form curriculum but a typical FE course, such as a BTEC vocational preparation/level 1 course, or an RSA or City and Guilds Foundation course, all of which are now offered in Bradford schools.

Mixed Attitudes to FE

24. The relationship between the college and the Asian communities is ambivalent. There are feelings of insecurity and lack of knowledge, paradoxically coupled with feelings of respect and admiration. On the one hand the college is seen as a venerated educational institution that by definition must be good, and a good place for Asian students. On the other hand, and particularly for parents of Asian girls, the college presents an unsafe environment, less controlled than school and 'full of temptations'. Associated with this was the parental view that pass rates at the college were low by comparison with those at school and this was because some students were, in the view of one parent, 'only there for a doss'. Students however emphasised the pressures of academic work at the college and spoke of their concern to correct such a reputation.

25. Among both school pupils and college students there was a sharp distinction between male and female reactions to the college : 48 per cent of fifth form boys but only 11 per cent of girls expressed favourable attitudes to the college, and 60 per cent of female students felt that the bad things about the college outweighed the good.

A lack of knowledge about the college among the Asian community

26. It is clear from the survey that the FE system is not well understood and that this is a major factor in lack of comprehension about particular institutions. Most interviewees knew the location of the main college site and had visited it for one reason or another, but knowledge

about college courses was relatively rare. Forty per cent of both school pupils' and their parents' knowledge was classified by the research team as poor and only one parent had seen any written information about the college. The attention of interviewers was drawn by respondents to the absence of any information about the college in Asian languages, and, within the college, to the lack of notices in the Asian languages or of any reception staff able to speak an Asian language.

27. Word of mouth appeared to be the most common means of receiving information about college courses. The main source of knowledge for Asian people is thus limited to what the Asian communities already know. Recruitment may therefore be concentrated on to courses already attended by South Asians and perceived as satisfactory by them or by careers advisors. Only 15 per cent of the total sample had received any information from college publicity. These findings were confirmed to some extent by the figures on student distribution below.

The distribution of Asian students in FE

28. The evidence relating to the concentration of South Asian students on lower level FE courses is of some complexity. If all low-level courses are included, the percentage of Asian students on such courses is clearly out of proportion to their overall representation in the college. If, however, language-related courses are excluded, there is still evidence of disproportionate distribution of Asian students, but it is related to subject rather than level of work. Where a course was specifically created to meet the needs of Asian school leavers, a recruitment of over 50 per cent of South Asian students was easy to achieve. In other areas recruitment was patchy. The most popular courses for Asian students were in the School of Science and Technology, and particularly TEC courses in Electical, Electronic and Mechanical Engineering. While this interest is explained by staff in terms of family employment histories, Engineering is no longer an industrial sector which employs

many young people. Courses leading to employment in other relatively buoyant sectors of the local employment market - hairdressing and catering - attracted no Asians. BTEC Office Arts and Nursery Nursing were recruiting South Asians up to and over population norms, but Art and Design courses had no Asian students whatsoever.

29. Staff concerned with some of these subject areas of low or no recruitment explained this in terms of differences between British and Asian cultures, the association of some work with female students and cultural disapproval of some forms of female occupation. Other explanations brought up in discussions with staff and students raised questions about the college as an institution : Were departments operating on the basis of stereotyped views of Asian students? Were admissions criteria and procedures unfair to Asian students? In a short survey such as this, these questions could not be adequately investigated, though the college is undertaking its own internal follow-up work to the survey.

Parental influence over educational choice

30. According to the perceptions of the parents, over 70 per cent of Asian school children and college students, whether boys or girls, make their own choices about their future careers. The evidence suggests that lack of information about the education system leaves parents with little chance of participating in discussions about their children's choice to the extent they might wish to. This view was endorsed by local community groups who felt that Asian parents had little knowledge of the FE system.

FE links with community groups

31. Officers of some community groups, especially the Bangladeshi Peoples Association, were concerned about the lack of contact between their organisations and the college. Although few Bangladeshi people are currently attracted to college courses, the community wished to see its young people attending college.

32. Other community leaders from the largest Pakistani community group felt that the dialogue between the college and the community consisted only of the college selling its courses (already designed and developed elsewhere) to the community. They felt that the Asian community would prefer a dialogue where courses were designed and developed in consultation with the community and its representative organisations.

Board of Management

Chairman

J G Owen CBE, *Chief Education Officer, Devon*

Members

J C N Baillie, *National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education*
J Deboo OBE, *Confederation of British Industry*
J W Ballard, *Association of Principals of Colleges*
Association of Colleges of Further and Higher Education
R J Hartles CBE, *Association of Metropolitan Authorities*
R Jackson, *Trades Union Congress*
T P Melia HMI, *Department of Education and Science*
J Morris, *Association of County Councils*
L Rees, *Welsh Joint Education Committee*
Rev Canon George Tolley, *Manpower Services Commission*
C R Walker, *Department of Education and Science*

Observers

Dr F D Duffin, *Department of Education, Northern Ireland*
J Howgego, *Scottish Education Department*
K McWilliams, *School Curriculum Development Committee*
P C Webb HMI, *Welsh Office Education Department*

Secretary

Jack Mansell, *Chief Officer, Further Education Unit.*

Objectives

The objectives for which ***The Further Education Unit (FEU)*** *is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:*
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A limited number of extra copies of this report are available from

Publications Despatch Centre,
Department of Education and Science,
Honeypot Lane, Canons Park,
Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AZ.